

WINTER 2007

IN THIS ISSUE

COVER

Preparedness for
Individuals with
Special Needs a
Top Priority

COMMUNITIES

Exercise and
Evaluation Program
Strengthening
Response

FIRST RESPONDERS

Electronic Warrants
Project up and
Running in one
Kentucky Community

FAMILIES

Continuation of
cover story.

KOHS HEADQUARTERS

Comments by (Ret.)
Major Alecia
Webb-Edgington

Be Ready for Winter



Ernie Fletcher
Governor

Steve Pence
Lieutenant Governor



"The urgency of our nation's security is the calling of our times" – President George W. Bush

PREPAREDNESS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS A TOP PRIORITY

Kentuckians with disabilities are living more independently and are more integrated into their communities than ever before. In the last several decades, legislation such as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as well as the *President's New Freedom Initiative* have enabled many Kentuckians with disabilities to enjoy greater access to public programs and facilities, schools, mass transit systems, hospitals and the workplace.

Today more sidewalks have curb cuts allowing wheelchair users to navigate the streets independently; para-transit service allows individuals to be picked up at their homes and driven to their destinations; and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can independently communicate by telephone using the Telecommunication Relay Service which operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Although strides are being made in these areas, many challenges continue to exist relating to emergency preparedness. News reports, personal accounts and research suggest that emergency planning and response efforts often overlook the needs of people with disabilities. This includes securing electrical power for respirators, keeping adequate stock of life-sustaining medication on hand, providing mobility



assistance to those who need it and making emergency information accessible through alternative means such as closed captioning during emergency broadcasts and providing Braille or large print emergency information as requested.

In Kentucky, recent Census data indicates that nearly 1 in 3 Kentuckians are designated with a disability

SPECIAL NEEDS

Continued on Preparing Families page.

PREPARING COMMUNITIES

EXERCISE AND EVALUATION PROGRAM STRENGTHENING RESPONSE



First Responder participates in a decontamination Exercise.

While the old adage “failing to plan is planning to fail” is oftentimes used to describe a sports team preparing for a big game or a business readying itself for a new year, the same can be said for our first response community’s efforts to train for natural and man-made disasters.

First Response preparedness is a chief priority for the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security. One aspect of planning and training the Commonwealth’s First Responders is the Kentucky Exercise and Evaluation Program (KY-HSEEP), which hosts exercises for all responders to prepare for “real world” events such as natural disasters; earthquakes, floods, and emergencies caused by criminal behavior; school-hostage situations, agro-terrorism, and many more.

“The benefits are immeasurable. No team would show up to a game without a plan in place and the execution of that plan practiced over and over,” says Bryant Stiles, Division Director of Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation.

“The same can be said for our responders. If they don’t practice together, they may not be as effective when they respond together.”

In 2006, more than 1,500 responders from various agencies across the state participated in a homeland security exercise. The Exercise program is a partnership between homeland security, the Kentucky Fire Commission, Kentucky Division of Emergency Management, Department for Public Health, the state’s Area Development Districts and the Department for Criminal Justice Training.

If you or your agency would like to participate in a homeland security exercise, please contact Bryant Stiles at (270) 273-3187 or by e-mail at Bryant.stiles@kctcs.edu. Additional program information can be found by visiting www.homelandsecurity.ky.gov.

PREPARING FIRST RESPONDERS

ELECTRONIC WARRANTS PROJECT UP AND RUNNING IN ONE KENTUCKY COMMUNITY

Kentucky's public safety organizations and officials with the state's Unified Criminal Justice Information System (UCJIS) are attacking the problem of outstanding and unserviceable warrants through the

development of an automated system that will facilitate the sharing of information concerning active warrants among jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth. This pilot project, known as "eWarrants," enabled law enforcement officers in Clark County to serve the first electronic warrant in the state this Fall.

Since its inception, more than a dozen warrants have been entered into the system, with a number of those served to date. As a pilot participant, Clark County committed to entering at least five warrants per month. When the system goes live state wide in mid to late 2007, all warrants will be entered.

Kentucky's eWarrant project was developed in partnership with the Commonwealth Office of Technology, Justice and Public Safety Cabinet, Administrative Office of the Courts, and the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security. The project replaces manual protocols for processing warrant information with an electronic method for making warrant information available via the Law Enforcement Information Network of Kentucky (LINK).

According to Mary Pedersen, Chief Information Officer for the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security and Kentucky's UCJIS Project Manager, "the sharing of warrant information in the Commonwealth typically has been accomplished by means of the exchange of multi-copy documents prepared in various formats, from handwritten narratives to simple Microsoft Word or WordPerfect documents to small, unsophisticated on-line applications."

This information oftentimes was inaccurate, incomplete, and illegible, and not routinely entered into LINK. Kentucky's UCJIS officials say that the standardization and automation of warrants under the eWarrant project will provide law enforcement officials with near real-time access to warrant information when they need it.



PREPARING FAMILIES

SPECIAL NEEDS Continued from cover.

status. For this reason, the Kentucky Council on Developmental Disabilities, Department for Community Based Services, Kentucky Division of Emergency Management, Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living, the Kentucky Department for Public Health, and the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security, have teamed up to integrate the various needs of the Commonwealth's special needs populations into the emergency planning process.

On January 9, 2007, the agencies hosted a Summit in Frankfort to take a critical look at Kentucky's emergency planning processes and identify how they may be strengthened with regard to

individuals with disabilities and the elderly. The agencies gained the input of individuals with disabilities, service providers and agencies, Emergency Management personnel, First Responders, and business and government personnel, to help officials understand the issues and evaluate the best methods for correcting the emergency planning problems that affect disabled and elderly Kentuckians.

The agencies are now assessing that information and will be submitting a report in the coming months.

For more information about preparedness for special needs individuals, please visit www.ProtectYourFamily.ky.gov.



NEWSLETTER COMMENTS BY (RET.) MAJ. ALECIA WEBB-EDGINGTON DIRECTOR, KENTUCKY OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY



Photo courtesy of Kirk Schilea

(Ret.) Major Alecia Webb-Edgington

2006 was a dynamic and successful year for the continued implementation of Kentucky's homeland security initiatives. While focusing on prevention, we are continuing in our efforts to ensure Kentucky's communities, First Responders and families are prepared for any disaster or emergency.

As we enter a new year, 2007 looks to be another banner year for the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security. While we will continue to focus on issues related to infrastructure protection, first response preparedness and community preparedness, the area of communications and information sharing will remain at the top of our priority list. In 2006, 69% of all homeland security funds went to support the communications capabilities of the Commonwealth's First Responders. This year, I am confident in saying that this level of support will continue in this critical mission area.

We recognize that homeland security and emergency management are a shared responsibility, and it is not without your help that we may continue to ensure a greater level of public safety for every Kentuckian. I appreciate the hard work of so many throughout the state and I encourage you to partner with our office in our collective effort to keep Kentucky ready and prepared.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

Our goal is to coordinate and collaborate with you, our preparedness partners. We welcome your thoughts and ideas.

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BE READY FOR WINTER

Winter weather can be aggressive and leave people homebound or even stranded. There are steps you can take to keep your family safe during potentially severe weather.

- Have a kit of food, water, and supplies to last up to three days in case you are unable to leave your home.
- Have an emergency kit in your car as well. Recent news stories illustrate the importance of having supplies in the event you are stranded.
- Be informed of the weather by watching your local news station or listening to the radio. A weather radio is also an extra piece of preparedness equipment with many benefits.
- Check the site, www.ProtectYourFamily.ky.gov to get specific tips on preparing for weather related emergencies
- Also check out <http://www.prepareforkyweather.org/> for weather preparedness information.

